

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

CROP CIRCLES OF 2001

This year's crop circle season in England had a slow start, but some spectacular patterns and recurring themes finally graced the landscape.

by Andy Thomas © 2001

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Images from the
Crop Circle Connector website:
www.cropcircleconnector.com

There had been dire warnings from sceptics about this season. The first ever, and much publicised, legal prosecution for a man-made crop formation in late 2000 meant that the land-artists they believed responsible would all stay at home for fear of the law. The threat of hefty trespass fines imposed during the Foot and Mouth crisis afflicting the UK would ensure even further that hardly any circles would appear. Even if a few did, no-one would be allowed in.

None of these doom-filled predictions came to pass, and though the season was later to start than many before it, the first UK formations did actually arrive during the height of the Foot and Mouth outbreak in mid-May. No apologies were forthcoming from the sceptics, naturally. Though access to fields was tighter than before as far as visiting new circles went, the movement restrictions had eased enough by high summer for some farmers to open up their fields without qualms.

The first designs picked up on themes begun in 2000. One recurring motif in Wiltshire was a type of mandala based around triangles with curved edges, while one formation at Badbury revived the chequerboard idea founded the year before, but this time encircled by a coiled snake eating its tail, which had a flavour of Aztec or Mayan culture. Aztec symbolism eventually came big time in what for many people was the best formation of the year, up at Wakerley Woods, Northamptonshire: a circular segmented arrangement of Aztec calendar signs. In fact, some of the year's most ambitious designs appeared in the north of England.

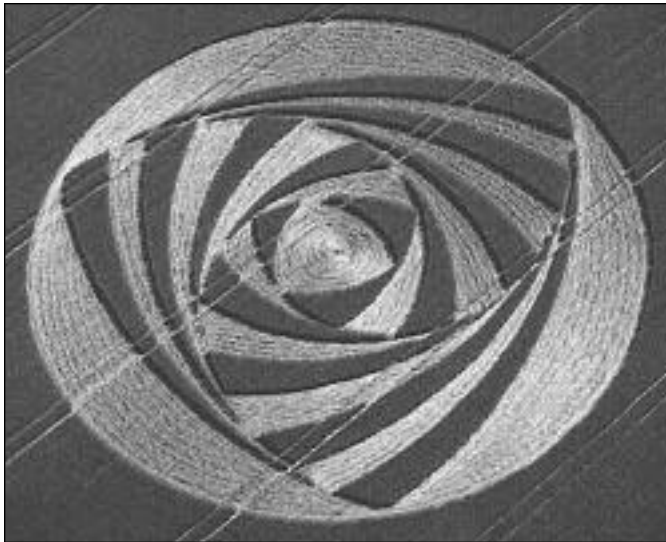
Another spectacular, recurring trait was a form of star mandala, radiating small standing circles in rays, and some other new surprises and unexpected themes such as an ingenious style of interlocking wavy curves which began in July at Windmill Hill, Wiltshire. One universally acclaimed formation, christened "the Angel", was a cluster of crescents with over 70 radiating, perfectly straight lines within it, laid in one continuous sweep of crop without any deviation or wobble.

Despite these, though, for some there was a slightly lacklustre feel to the first 50 or so UK glyphs, with few to match the intense impact and ingenuity of masterpieces from former years. The evolution of the designs was perceived to have faltered slightly—though not everyone agreed, citing unrealistic expectations on the part of some observers.

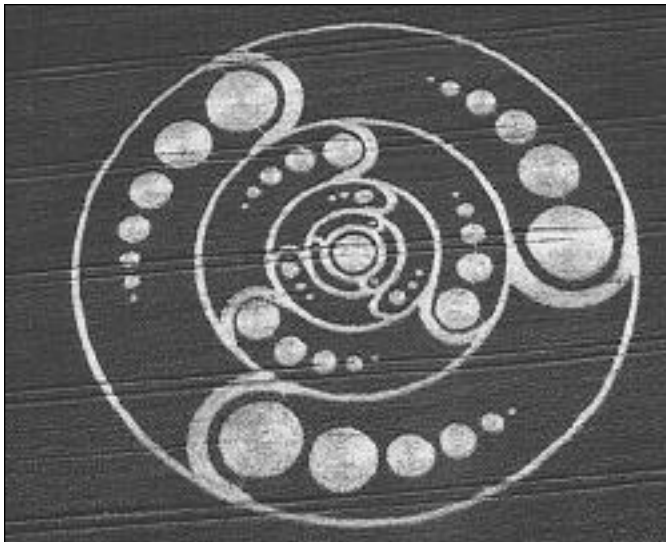
However, at the time of writing (mid-August), a major formation has just appeared—which looks like the season may have saved the best for the latter part of the summer. A six-armed fractal "Julia Set" at Milk Hill, Wiltshire, reminiscent of the classic designs from 1996—around 800 feet (244 metres) across and containing around 400 circles of many sizes—has stunned observers with its scale and genius.

With a late harvest and at least three weeks still left for the chances of something even more remarkable, and with formations appearing almost by the day, perhaps the circles have just been pacing themselves. But those who believe the phenomenon to be psychically interactive with human expectation have pointed out that the seeds of deliberately spread confusion may have stunted the early development of the crop glyphs in 2001. Certainly, for a year that began with doom-ridden prophecies and low expectations, there was much confusion and hoax paranoia—similar to the feeling which prevailed in 1993, a year which preceded a major renaissance in 1994.

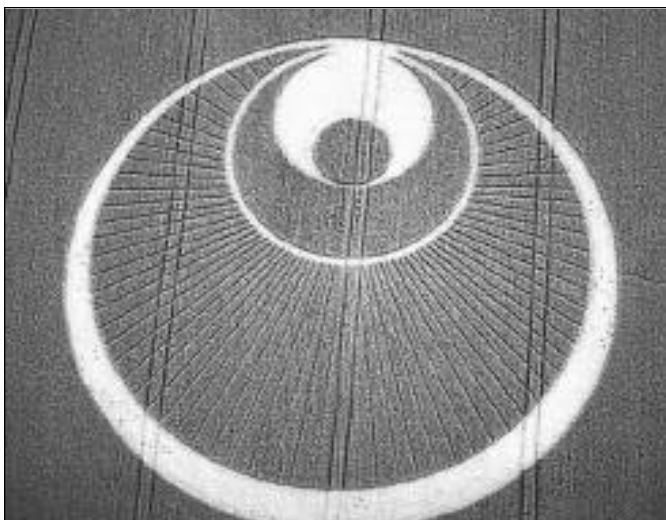
The paranoia was boosted late in 2000, with the aforementioned prosecution for the making of *one* man-made formation. The paltry £100 fine given to the hoaxer hardly proved a disincentive to others, and the upshot was that the wide media coverage given to the story brought an unbalanced focus onto the man-made component of the crop circle phenomenon. This was deliberately stirred further by the prosecuted individual by way of



Berwick Bassett, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 9th June. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.



Knap Hill, near Alton Priors, Wiltshire. Reported 5th August. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.



Gog Magog Hills, near Cambridge, Cambridgeshire. Reported 25th July. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.

a campaign of emails, leafleteering and further circlemaking.

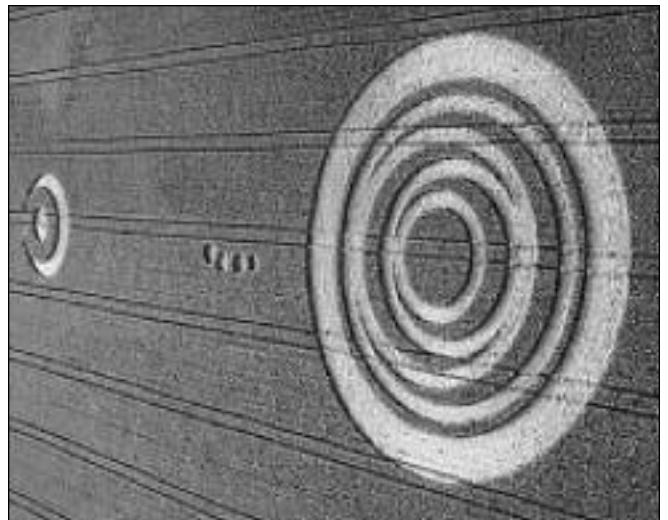
The creation of several man-made formations for either research purposes or TV shows hardly helped matters. The fact that some high-profile circle researchers were themselves involved in sponsoring some of these projects sat badly with many enthusiasts, and some were critical of their methods, protocols and uncertain motivations, questioning their conclusions. The making of a well-executed direct copy of a 1995 astronomical crop design for a UK film production (for a fictional story) further shook the faith of some, though to the discerning the differences were clearly apparent and it lacked the important subtleties which had so distinguished the original.

Despite the subterfuge exercises, there seemed to be a resurgence of interest in the crop circles from the realm of film and television, with no less than five camera crews from around the world filming video, TV and movie documentaries, following "croppies" around in fields, pubs and conferences. The results of most of these will presumably surface in 2002.

But away from the circus that habitually surrounds the UK crop circle scene, other countries received formations of their own to explore with rather less stressful intensity. Germany scored highest with 10 (at the time of writing), each as elaborate as many of their UK counterparts but each with its own flavour. Canada, the Czech Republic, Israel, Serbia and Poland also reported several new crop glyphs.

The Netherlands, which had seven formations, has meanwhile become the focus of attention for important scientific work into the circle phenomenon. The US-based BLT Research, led by Nancy Talbott, which has done much to promote Dr W. C. Levengood's studies of biological anomalies inside circle-affected crops, has continued its investigations into circular appearances and their links with balls of light in The Netherlands—and in particular with a young man in the Amsterdam area who seems to attract such phenomena. Their findings have found his stories to be true.

Meanwhile, Dr Eltjo Haselhoff has been conducting his own studies into physical effects and the link with aerial light phenomena. He has become, after Dr Levengood, only the second person to have a scientific paper on the subject of cerealogy published in the peer-reviewed journal *Physiologia Plantarum*. (A layman's version of his paper can be found at www.swirlednews.com.) Dr Haselhoff found himself part of an intriguing mystery while



Newhouse Farm, near Acton Turnville, North Somerset. Reported 5th August. Photograph © Steve Alexander/Karen Douglas 2001.

investigating a "scorpion-shaped" formation at Stadskanaal with a team from the Dutch Centre for Crop Circle Studies in early August. As they strolled around the formation, an extra circle appeared even as they surveyed it, though no one saw it happen; suddenly, there it was. Photos proved that it had not been there when they first entered. They began to feel ill effects as they approached it, and decided to leave in case the newly formed shape had dangerous properties. The batteries immediately drained in one of the cameras present, and a digital camera was later found to have had its data corrupted.

This is but one demonstration that, despite all the intrigues and paranoia which may infect the crop circle community from time to time, a sizeable mystery still remains around this most beautiful of unexplained phenomena.

Science may also explain why some of this year's earlier UK formations seemed subdued: evidence has shown that crop circle appearances are linked to underground water and the state of geological aquifers. BLT Research's data from previous years shows that summers where the aquifers are low seem to produce the most numerous, vibrant designs. The extensive flooding of late 2000 left the aquifers abnormally high at the start of this season.

It is interesting to note that BLT Research is still finding uniform biological anomalies in samples from crop patterns sent in from around the globe, and yet man-made tests—despite unfounded claims by hoaxers—have still been unable to replicate the core findings of these results. Whatever man-made formations there may be, some are not easy to explain away so quickly.

In addition to the British film being planned, 2002 will see the release of a new Hollywood blockbuster starring Mel Gibson as a farmer whose life is turned upside down by the supernatural arrival of a crop design on his land. Whatever spin Tinseltown puts on the mystery, attention towards the non-fictional circles will almost certainly intensify a hundredfold when the movie arrives, and a whole new generation may discover something going on that has hitherto passed them by.

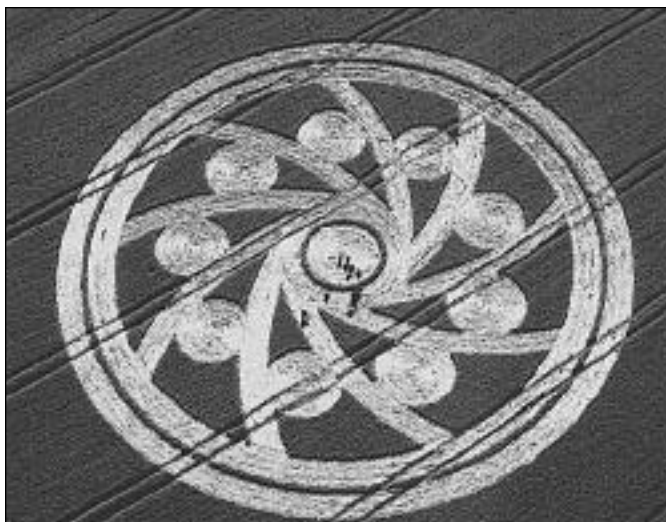
With all this new attention partly in mind, Southern Circular Research this year successfully launched its website www.swirlednews.com, a rolling news service for the crop circles (replacing its long-running journal, *SC*) to balance sceptical propaganda and disinformation with incisive commentary and analysis. Readers are invited to log on for the real stories about what's going on in the fields.



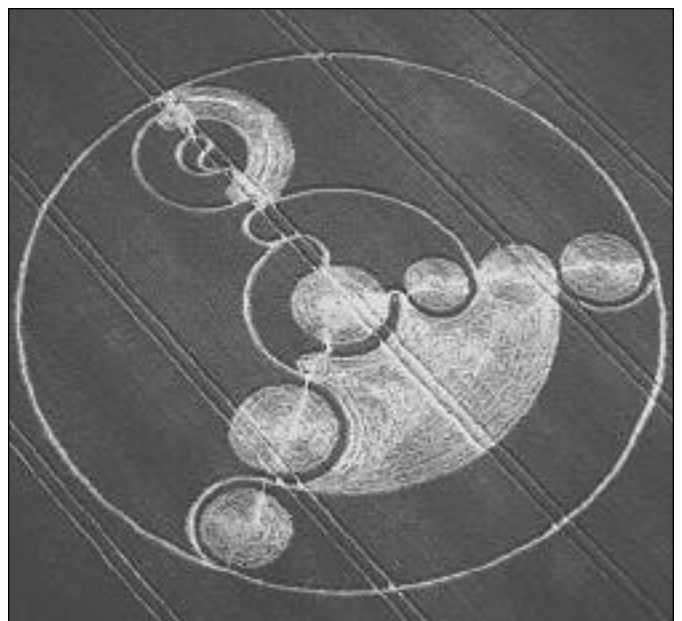
Englishcombe, near Bath, Somerset. Reported 12th August. Photograph © Gary Howe 2001.



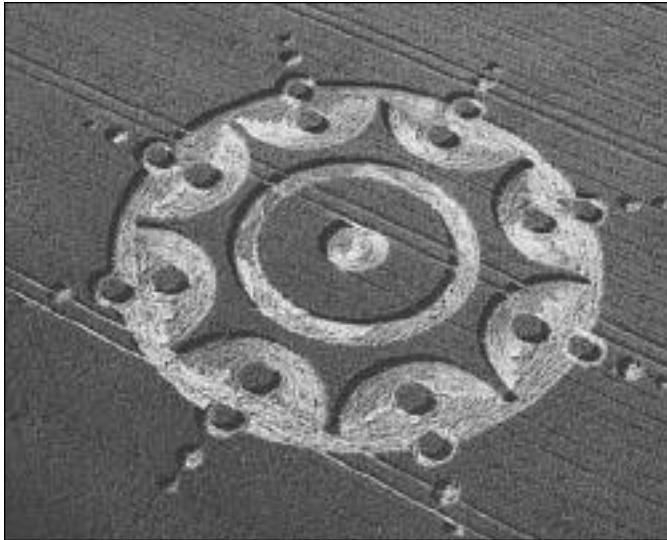
Milk Hill, near Alton Barnes, Wiltshire. Reported 13th August. Photograph © Steve Alexander/Karen Douglas 2001.



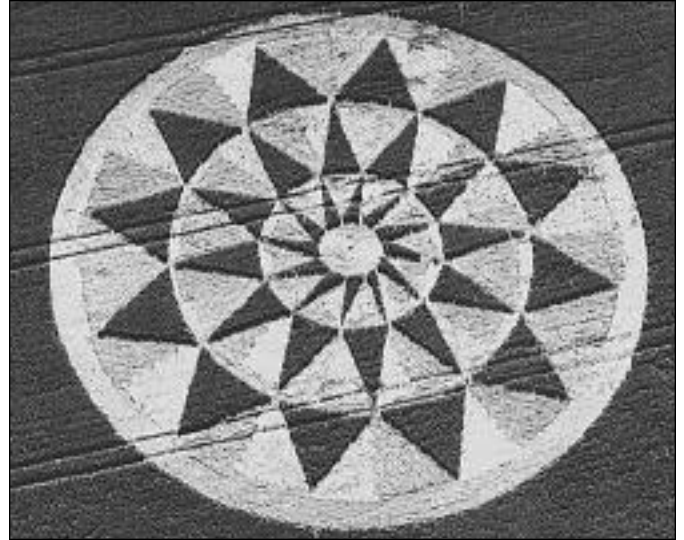
Woodborough Hill, near Alton Barnes, Wiltshire. Reported 10th August. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.



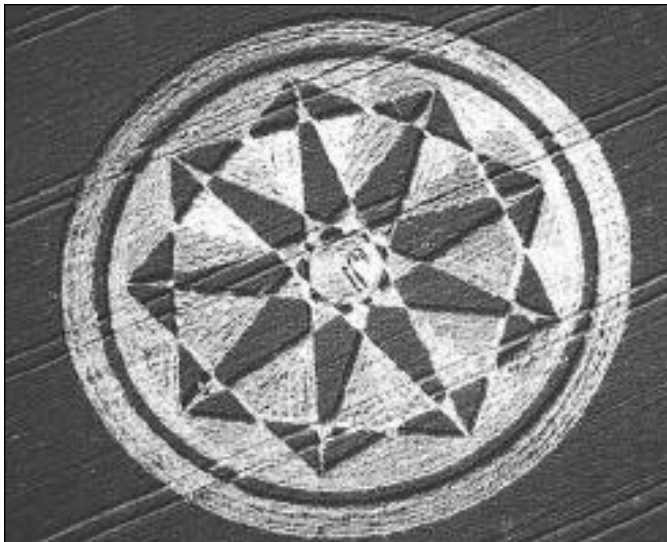
Yatesbury, near Avebury Trusloe, Wiltshire. Reported 22nd July. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.



Lane End Down, near Kilmeston, Hampshire. Reported 22nd July. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.



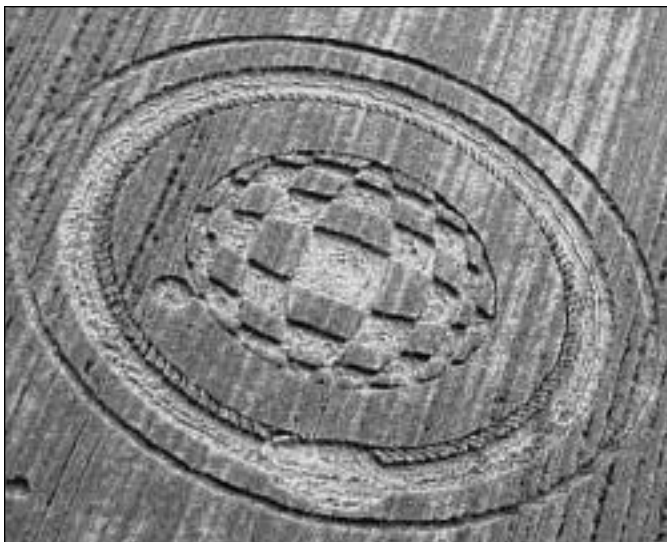
All Cannings Bridge, near All Cannings, Wiltshire. Reported 30th June. Photograph © Steve Alexander/Karen Douglas 2001.



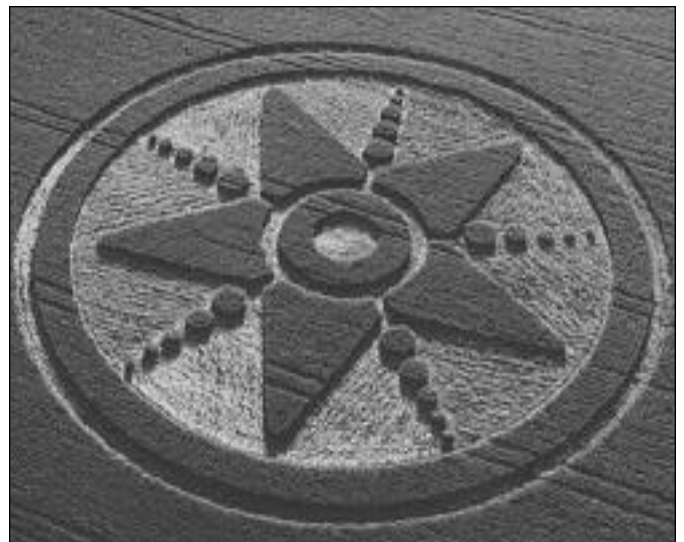
Milk Hill, near Alton Barnes, Wiltshire. Reported 12th July. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.



Silbury Hill, near Avebury, Wiltshire. Reported 24th July. Photograph © Stuart Dike 2001.



Hill Barn, near Badbury, Wiltshire. Reported 17th June. Image © Stuart Dike 2001.



Chilcomb Down, near No Man's Land, Hampshire. Reported 15th July. Photograph © Steve Alexander 2001.

THE CHILBOLTON OBSERVATORY FORMATIONS Response to a 1974 Earth Transmission?

by Linda Moulton Howe © 2001

For the past few years, crop formations have appeared in the wheat field near the Chilbolton Observatory in Chilbolton village, south of Andover, Hampshire. The one from August 2000 now seems linked to the August 2001 formations. Last year's was one of England's largest formations in terms of square footage, and it appeared next to the government-owned land upon which the radio telescope complex was built in 1965. The facility is sectioned off from the public and is surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence.

The estimated measurements of the code formation are 200 feet (60.9 metres) long and 85 feet (25.9 metres) wide; the estimated face measurements are approximately 160 feet (48.8 m) wide and 180 (54.9 m) feet long. Both are framed by wheat laid down in almost identical fashion, according to field researcher Charles Mallett from Roundway, Wiltshire.

According to an employee at the Chilbolton Observatory, on Tuesday 14 August 2001 a framed "face" appeared, followed the next Monday, 20 August, by a "binary code". When Paul Vigay, the director of the Independent Research Centre for Unexplained Phenomena in Southsea, Hampshire, England, first saw the aerial photograph of the "code" formation, he immediately recognised it as extremely similar to the digitally encoded transmission sent on 16 November 1974 from the Arecibo, Puerto Rico, radio telescope out into space. The Arecibo transmission was planned by astronomers, including the late Carl Sagan, at Cornell University. Cornell operates the 300-metre-diameter (985 feet) radio telescope, built into a mountain, under a cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation.

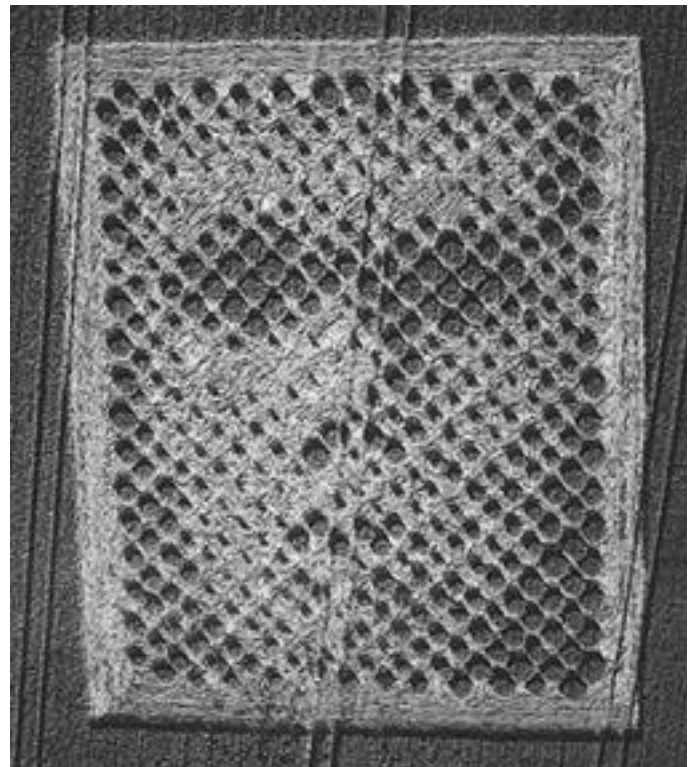
That original 1974 Arecibo transmission is shown here in a black-and-white graphic of the binary code beamed at a star cluster called M13, about 23,000 light years from Earth. The Chilbolton 2001 "transmission code" is presented for comparison with Arecibo's.

The 1974 Arecibo transmission indicated human double-helix DNA with the double arched lines above the humanoid figure. In the crop formation at Chilbolton, there is a difference in the pattern compared with the schematic of the Arecibo transmission.

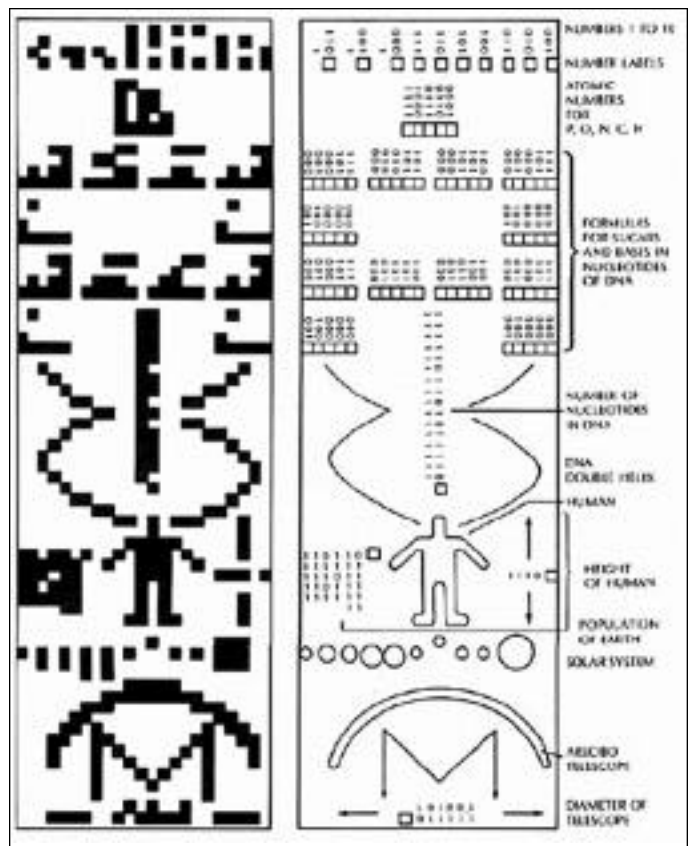
(Source: by Linda Moulton Howe, www.earthfiles.com)



The "binary code" on the left and "face" to the right in the wheat field near Chilbolton Observatory near Wherwell, Hampshire, England, were first seen on different dates, according to a Chilbolton Observatory employee. The "face" near top centre was reported on Tuesday 14th August. The "binary code" to the left was reported on Monday 20th August. Aerial photograph © 2001 by Steve Alexander.



"Face" in the wheat field near Chilbolton Observatory, Wherwell, Hampshire, first noticed on Tuesday 14th August. Aerial photograph © 2001 by Steve Alexander.



Comparison produced to show the Chilbolton "transmission code" on the left, and, on the right, the schematic of the transmission sent on 16th November 1974 from the Arecibo radio telescope towards the M13 star cluster (from *Cosmos* © 1976 Carl Sagan).